



Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health

Competency Guidelines

LEVEL II, INFANT FAMILY SPECIALIST

INTRODUCTION

The Level II Competency Guidelines were developed by the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health to clearly describe the areas of expertise, responsibilities, and behaviors that can demonstrate competency at this level.

COMPETENCY DETAIL

Area of Expertise

As Demonstrated By

Theoretical Foundations

Knowledge Areas
*pregnancy & early parenthood
infant & young child development
and behavior
Infant/young child & family-
centered practice
relationship-based, therapeutic
practice
family relationships & dynamics
attachment, separation, trauma &
loss
disorders of infancy/early
childhood
cultural competence*

For infants, young children, and families referred and enrolled for services:

- During observations and assessments, identifies emerging competencies of the infant and young child within a relationship context
- Supports and reinforces parent's capacity to seek appropriate care during pregnancy
- Supports and reinforces each parent's strengths, emerging parenting competencies, and positive parent-infant/young child interactions and relationships
- Helps parents to:
 - "See" the infant/young child as a person, as well as all the factors (playing, holding, teaching, etc.) that constitute effective parenting of that child
 - Derive pleasure from daily activities with their children
- Shares with families realistic expectations for the development of their infants/young children and strategies that support those expectations
- Demonstrates familiarity with conditions that optimize early infant brain development
- Recognizes risks and disorders of infancy/early childhood conditions which require the assistance of other professionals from health, mental health, education, and child welfare systems
- Shares with families an understanding and appreciation of family relationship development
- Applies understanding of cultural competence to communicate effectively, establish positive relationships with families, and demonstrate respect for the uniqueness of each client family's culture

Law, Regulation & Agency Policy

Knowledge Areas
*ethical practice
government, law & regulation
agency policy*

- Exchanges complete and unbiased information in a supportive manner with families and other team members
- Practices confidentiality of each family's information in all contexts with exception only when making necessary reports to protect the safety of a family member (e.g., Children's Protective Services, Duty to Warn, etc.)
- Maintains appropriate personal boundaries with infants/young children and families served, as established by the employing agency
- Promptly and appropriately reports harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare to Protective Services
- Accurately and clearly explains the provisions and requirements of federal, state and local laws affecting infants/young children and families (e.g. Part C of IDEA, child protection, child care licensing rules and regulations) to families, child or foster care staff, community-based programs
- Shares information with non-citizen families and service agencies about the rights of citizen children of non-citizen parents
- Personally works within the requirements of:
 - Federal and state law
 - Agency policies and practices
 - Professional code of conduct

COMPETENCY DETAIL

Area of Expertise

As Demonstrated By

Systems Expertise

Knowledge Areas
service delivery systems
community resources

- Assists families to anticipate, obtain, and advocate for concrete needs & other services from public agencies and community resources
- Actively seeks resources to address child and family needs
- Works collaboratively with and makes referrals to other service agencies to ensure that the child(ren) and family receives services for which they are eligible and that the services are coordinated
- Helps parents build the skills they need to access social support from extended family, neighbors, and friends needed and as available in the community
- Makes families and service providers/agencies aware of community resources available to families

Direct Service Skills

Knowledge Areas
observation & listening
screening & assessment
responding with empathy
advocacy
life skills
safety

For infants, young children, and families referred and enrolled for services:

- Establishes trusting relationship that supports the parent(s) and infant/young child in their relationship with each other, and that facilitates needed change
- Provides services to children and families with multiple, complex risk factors
- Formally and informally observes the parent(s) or caregiver(s) and infant/young child to understand the nature of their relationship, developmental strengths, and capacities for change
- Conducts formal and informal assessments of infant/young child development, in accordance with established practice
- Effectively implements relationship-based, therapeutic parent-infant/young child interventions that enhance the capacities of parents and infants/young children
- Provides information and assistance to parents/or caregivers to help them:
 - Understand their role in the social and emotional development of infants/young children
 - Understand what they can do to promote health, language and cognitive development in infancy and early childhood
 - Find pleasure in caring for their infants/young children
- Nurtures the parents' relationship with each other, if one exists; alternatively, helps the custodial parent manage appropriate contact with the non-custodial parent
- Promotes parental competence in:
 - Facing challenges
 - Advocating on behalf of themselves and their children
 - Resolving crises and reducing the likelihood of future crises
 - Solving problems of basic needs and familial conflict
- Advocates for services needed by children and families with the supervisor, agencies, and programs
- Recognizes environmental and care giving risks to the health and safety of the infant/young child and parents, and takes appropriate action

COMPETENCY DETAIL

Area of Expertise

As Demonstrated By

Working with Others

Skill Areas

*building & maintaining
relationships
supporting others/mentoring
collaborating
resolving conflict
empathy & compassion*

- Builds and maintains effective interpersonal relationships with families and professional colleagues by:
 - Respecting and promoting the decision-making authority of families
 - Understanding and respecting the beliefs and practices of the family's culture
 - Following the parents' lead
 - Following through consistently on commitments and promises
 - Providing regular communications and updates
- Works with and responds to families & colleagues in a tactful and understanding manner
- Provides positive, specific feedback to encourage and reinforce desired behaviors and interactions in families
- Assists families to develop the skills they need to become their own advocates
- Models appropriate behavior and interventions for new staff as they observe home visits
- Encourages parents to share with other parents (e.g. through nurturing programs, parent-child interaction groups, etc.)
- Collaborates and shares information with staff of child care, foster care, community-based programs, and other service agencies to ensure effective, coordinated services
- Works constructively to find "win-win" solutions to conflicts with colleagues (e.g., interagency, peer-peer, and/or supervisor-supervisee conflicts)
- Provides emotional support to parents/caregivers and children when sad, distressed, etc.

Communicating

Skill Areas

*listening
speaking
writing*

- Actively listens to others; asks questions for clarification
- Uses appropriate non-verbal behavior and correctly interprets others' non-verbal behavior
- Communicates honestly, sensitively, and empathetically with families, using non-technical language
- Obtains translation services as necessary to ensure effective communication with families who do not speak English
- Writes clearly, concisely, and with the appropriate style (business, conversational, etc.) in creating notes, reports and correspondence

COMPETENCY DETAIL

Area of Expertise

As Demonstrated By

Thinking

Skill Areas

analyzing information
solving problems
exercising sound judgment
maintaining perspective
planning & organizing

- Sees and can explain the “big picture” when analyzing situations
- Sees and can explain the interactions of various factors
- Assigns priorities to needs, goals, and actions
- Considers difficult situations carefully
- Evaluates alternatives prior to making decisions
- Integrates all available information and consults with others when making important decisions
- Generates new insights and workable solutions to issues related to effective relationship-based, family-centered care
- Defines, creates a sequence for, and prioritizes tasks necessary to perform role and meet the needs of families
- Employs effective systems for tracking individual progress, for assuring follow up, and for monitoring the effectiveness of service delivery as a whole

Reflection

Skill Areas

contemplation
self awareness
curiosity
professional/personal development
emotional response

- Regularly examines own thoughts, feelings, strengths, and growth areas; discusses issues, concerns, actions to take with supervisor, consultants or peers
- Consults regularly with supervisor, consultants, peers to understand own capacities and needs, as well as the capacities and needs of families
- Seeks a high degree of agreement between self-perceptions and the way others perceive him/her
- Remains open and curious
- Identifies and participates in learning activities related to the promotion of infant mental health
- Keeps up-to-date on current and future trends in child development and relationship-based practice
- Uses reflective practice throughout work with infants/young children and families to understand own emotional response to infant/family work and to recognize areas for professional and/or personal development